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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Death of Zarqawi Iran
PARIS - Friday, June 09, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Death of Zarqawi
Iran

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Zarqawi's demise elicits widespread coverage. While Le Figaro's headline is neutral, "The Americans Eliminate Zarqawi," La Croix headlines: "Iraq: A Terrorist Dies, Violence Continues." A headline echoed on Liberation's front page: "Iraq: Zarqawi Dead, War Continues." Inside, Liberation's editorial calls for "Caution" while Christophe Ayad titles his report: "Zarqawi Leaves Terror as His Legacy." Pascal Riche reporting from Washington comments: "This is a profitable operation for Washington, restoring the military's image all the while giving public opinion a positive sign." Le Figaro's Washington's correspondent agrees: "At his lowest in the ratings, President Bush hopes to get benefits out of the operation." Pierre Rousselin's editorial is simply titled: "The End of a Terrorist" while La Croix's editorialist Dominique Quinio titles her column: "An Picture of Terror." Inside, Agnes Rotivel analyzes the consequences of the operation: "A good operation for the Americans which does not necessarily mean the end of violence or the war in Iraq." (See Part C)

Le Figaro interviews Gerard Chaliand, an expert on international conflicts and the author of "Iraq: From One War to the Next," who says: "Iraq has not reached the point of a civil war. There is an insurrection and on the margins, the infrastructure of a civil war in the making... The new unity government is probably Iraq's last chance to avoid the radicalization of all of Iraq's antagonisms... But neither the Iraqi army nor the police... are in a position to put an end to the insurrection: American troops, even reduced, will have to stay for years. Because a political defeat would undermine the credibility of the U.S. which began a war in which the neo-cons and the Pentagon had only thought of preparing the military dimension..."

FM Douste-Blazy was interviewed on Europe One radio: On Zarqawi's death and Iraq he said: "Zarqawi represents the bloodiest form of terrorism... Today's priority in Iraq is political, with Iraq recovering full sovereignty over its institutions... the new government is a step forward but there is still too few Iraqis who believe in this national reconciliation." On Iran he said: "Historic decisions were made last week; for the first time in the past 20 years, the U.S. has accepted to give a helping hand to our European proposals. This is a victory for European diplomacy, and France's in particular... Chirac's visionary approach in the Iranian situation may have played a role in the U.S. president's thinking."

Iraq's Prime Minister Al-Maliki is profiled in La Croix, while Le Figaro interviews the senior editor of Iraq's daily al-Jarida: "The Sunnis intent was never to wage a war against the Shiites, as was Zarqawi's wish. They wanted to put an end to Iraq's occupation. Zarqawi's death should help guerrilla groups go further in their political integration, possibly opening a new chapter in their relationship with the government in Baghdad... But his death does not necessarily mean the end of violence... The specter of a civil war will have completely disappeared with the system of religious quotas in the distribution of power... and when the American occupation ends."

Le Figaro's article on Iran is entitled "The West Unbending about Iran." "Javier Solana who was in Paris said he was 'more optimistic than pessimistic' after his visit to Tehran where he presented the West's initiatives. Western capitals also estimate that Tehran's decision to 'take time' to analyze the proposals is a positive sign... But Paris firmly denies the idea that Solana might have offered the Iranians the prospect of some day being allowed to enrich uranium on their territory... All agree that this remains a yellow line not to be crossed..."

Liberation carries an op-ed entitled "President Bush's Iranian Trump Card" by Francois Gere of IFAS (Institute for Strategic Analysis) in which he says "the U.S. has everything to gain from normalizing relations with Iran." (See Part C)

Le Monde's article on the EU Council's report on CIA renditions is entitled "Europe Caught in the CIA's Spider's Web" and underscores that "France does not appear on the map of rendition flights 'for obvious political reasons,' according to Dick Marty..."

Financial La Tribune devotes its lead to the Paris stock exchange's losses of the past week, and the investors' "concerns related to fears of a U.S. economic slowdown." On the Euronext-NYSE merger, La Tribune points out that Thierry Breton, the Minister of the Economy, has been reserved, compared to President Chirac's pro Deutsche Borse stance and suggested that "public powers don't have reason to intervene in the NYSE/Euronext deal." La Tribune looks at Henry Paulson, the new American Treasury Secretary, who has to "restore prestige to his job and stop the drop in the dollar, as well as reassure financial markets and reign in rampant protectionism in Washington."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Death of Zargawi

"The End of a Terrorist"

Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/09): "The death of Zargawi was saluted by President Bush and Tony Blair as was proper. The coalition leaders had not had such an occasion for celebration in a long time. Zargawi had become America's number one enemy and the price on his head was higher than on Bin Laden's... By killing him, the coalition strikes a major blow to international terrorism while at same time ridding Iraq's insurrection of its most radical element. For President Bush, this is an un-hoped for event: with his ratings at their lowest, here is something to boost America's morale. And not only America's, for Zargawi had promised to export his battles... In Iraq, this does not mean that the Sunni insurrection is finished... But just as Baghdad's independent government was being finalized, one hopes that Zargawi's death will weaken the Jihadist movement... and put an end to the incredible violence targeting Shiite civilians with the goal of triggering a civil war... Iraq is at a turning point: Al-Maliki can begin to channel the Sunni insurrection and impose his authority, thereby giving the Americans a valid reason to reduce their troops... and concentrate on Afghanistan, which is becoming a sanctuary for Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Maybe even look to Somalia, which has just fallen into Islamic hands. But these other tests must not dampen today's satisfaction of having killed one of the most sanguinary terrorists on this planet."

"Caution"

Antoine de Gaudemar in left-of-center Liberation (06/09): "Zargawi's death comes at the perfect time: finally a victory can be announced after months of demoralizing news. The fact that this good news coincides with the final nominations in Iraq's government adds to Washington's satisfaction. And yet, Washington is not gloating. Because the Americans know Zargawi may not have been their number one enemy in Iraq... for he had already lost some of his authority... Another reason for America's restraint is what it knows about Al-Qaeda, whose leaders Bin Laden and Zawahiri are still at large. The network has a central cell but has many smaller ones that form locally if any one head is cut off, making the elimination of the leaders somewhat ineffective. The network's threats continue to reach out and are all the more frightening."

"The Picture of Terror"

Dominique Quinio in Catholic La Croix (06/09): "There is so much bad news coming from Iraq that the death of Zargawi is good news for a country which seems condemned to a never ending cycle of violence... His death is a success for the coalition and the Iraqi government... and a relief. But it is not enough to balance out the results of America's intervention in Iraq. The chaos confirms the worst fears of those who opposed the intervention. The war between the Sunnis and the Shiites is akin to a civil war... while the American troops are accused of torturing civilians... The blow to Al-Qaeda was immediately commented on by President Bush and Tony Blair: they expressed their satisfaction but shied away from triumphalism: while it is possible to win against Al-Qaeda, this blow does not signal the end of international terrorism... More than ever caution is of the essence and international cooperation indispensable to keep Islamic extremism from feeding on the world's ills and prospering."

Iran

"President Bush's Iranian Trump Card"

Francois Gere, Director of IFAS (Institute for Strategic Analysis) in left-of-center Liberation (06/09): "Washington's diplomatic isolation... and limited military options have led Washington to reassess its position on Iran and the possibility of a dialogue, albeit a conditional one... On three fronts, Iraq, oil and Afghanistan, Washington needs a constructive dialogue with Iran... This is an opportunity to turn a tactical maneuver into a strategic dialogue. But Washington needs to separate the different issues: the nuclear issue must be separated from the regional security issue... On the nuclear issue, it is possible for Iran to retain research capabilities, but with the IAEA's supervision... Regional security talks can be envisaged on a 2+1 approach: The first part of the equation involves bilateral talks between Iran and the U.S., while the second term would involve an international conference on regional security." STAPLETON